OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION MAKERS
Ensure continuation of Wellesley's recreational facilities as major community assets.	Retain Morses Pond as a recreational asset.	Preserve a balance between active and passive recreation.
Continue expansion of the trail system to link open space to town destinations.	Identify opportunities for new trails and enhancement of existing trails.	Support volunteer trail creation and enhancement.

Findings

- Wellesley has seen growth in its youth population over the past fifteen years, with the number of households with children under age 18 increasing from 34% in 1990 to 41% in 2000.
- The use of Wellesley's active recreational areas continues to increase as the Recreation Department expands its programs to meet the needs of the current population.
- The Town has made significant strides in the preservation of open space by promoting conservation easements and by expanding its trail system.

Key Challenges

- The increased use of Wellesley's active recreation space exerts significant pressure on the Town to convert some of its passive recreation space to active space.
- Wellesley's built-out condition and high property values preclude the acquisition of significant amounts of open space.
- Significant open space areas are either held by institutions or are in tax abatement programs that provide limited protection against development.

WELLESLEY FACTS Open Space and Recreation

Protected Open Space

■ Town-owned: over 550 acres

■ State-owned: 283 acres

Nonprofit conservation organizations: 33 acres

Land with conservation restrictions: 52 acres

Temporarily Protected Open Space

 Lands in tax abatement programs for forestry (Chapter 61), agriculture (Chapter 61A), or forestry (Chapter 61B): 255 acres

Unprotected Open Space

 Town-owned open space such as school playgrounds: approximately 159 acres

Institutions: 933 acres

Passive Recreational Opportunities

- 240 acres of passive-use parkland
- 19 miles of marked trails

Active Recreational Facilities and Programs

- 16 neighborhood parks/playgrounds (1-5 acres):
 46.5 acres
- 10 playfields (5-15 acres): 100.06 acres
- Swimming beach at Morses Pond (over 20,000 users in 2004)
- Annie F. Warren Recreation Center
- Programs serving over 6,000 people in 2004

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Wellesley residents value the visual and other benefits they get from privately-held open space.
- There is relatively little open land that is not either owned by institutions or protected in some way.
- Almost 80% of the unprotected open space is under institutional ownership.
- Not all town-owned land used for open space or recreational purposes is permanently protected from development.

Source: Town of Wellesley Open Space and Recreation Plan

A. Current Conditions

Wellesley's 1994 *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, prepared by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), and the 2003 *Town of Wellesley Community Preservation Plan*, prepared by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), provide the basis for the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations for open space and recreation. Additional sources include interviews with Janet Bowser, Natural Resources Commission (NRC) Department Head; Jan Kaseta, director of the Recreation Department; Bob White, member of the Trails Committee; and Meghan Conlon, Town Planner. A public meeting on 29 September 2005 provided community feedback on challenges and recommendations.

In addition to its environmental protection activities described in the previous chapter, the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) sets open space policy and pursues additional preservation of open space through acquisition by the town or nonprofit partners or through conservation restrictions on private land. Recently, the NRC has been working with Massachusetts Bay Community College to protect some of the open space on campus. The NRC also has management responsibility for conservation lands and passive parks and oversees trail management through the Trails Committee, which is a ten-member group that monitors conditions on existing trails and advises the NRC on the potential to expand town-maintained trails. The Department of Public Works implements open space management at the direction of the NRC.

The NRC has also been given responsibility for management of the Wellesley's playgrounds, athletic fields and other active recreation spaces, acting as the Parks Commission. Compared to other communities, this arrangement is somewhat unusual, since the environmental policy and permitting entity – in most towns, the Conservation Commission – usually manages conservation lands but not water supply or active recreation lands. The Wellesley Recreation Commission, a five-member board, sets policy for the Recreation Department, which organizes programs and classes that take place at the Warren Recreation Center and on Town-owned fields. The Playing Fields Task Force is an advisory group that identifies improvement needs for athletic fields. The high demand for playing fields create pressures for additional athletic fields on passive park land, sometimes resulting in tensions between the NRC and recreation advocates.

The Wellesley Conservation Council (WCC) is a local non-profit organization devoted to protecting the Town's natural resources and providing environmental education to Wellesley's citizens. The WCC owns eleven properties and holds three conservation easements. Some of these environmentally-significant properties are publicly accessible, such as the Guernsey Sanctuary, Pickle Point, the Susan Lee Memorial Sanctuary, Coveside Bank Sanctuary, Cold Spring Brook Sanctuary, and Cronk's Rocky Woodlands. The WCC also works with the Trails Committee to maintain the Guernsey Sanctuary Trail.

Open Space in Wellesley

One-third of Wellesley's total area, 2,267 acres of land and water, has been identified as green open space land. Approximately 40% of that area is permanently protected from development, and 10% has limited protection against development. Most of the privately-held open space is in the hands of educational institutions.

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Figure 1. Protected and Unprotected Open Space in Wellesley

	Ownership	Acres	Percent of Total Open
			Space
Permanent Protection	Local Government	552 [557]	24.3%
	State Government	240 [124]	10.6%
	Non-Profit Organization	33	1.5%
	Private Conservation Restrictions	52	3.7%
Total Permanent		910	40.1%
Protection			
Limited Protection	Private	225	9.9%
Total Limited Protection		225	9.9%
Total Protected Open		1135	50%
Space			
-		4.50	- 22/
Unprotected	Local Government	159 ¹	7.0%
	State Government	43	1.9%
	Private	932	41.1%
Total Unprotected Open Space		1134	50%

Source: Wellesley Assessor's List (2004); Town of Wellesley Community Preservation Plan (2003)

Protected Open Space

Protected open space can be public conservation and park land, water supply protection land (around wellheads and surface water supplies), conservation land owned by non-profit organizations, and conservation easements placed upon land by private owners. Town-owned permanently-protected open space falls into two categories: conservation and passive use park land (240 acres) and land covered by water (312 acres). Of the latter category, 186 acres are used as water supply land for the town. The state, through the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), owns and manages 140 acres of the Charles River Reservation in Wellesley. In addition, the Wellesley Conservation Council, a land protection nonprofit, owns 33 acres of open space, and 52 acres are protected from development by conservation restrictions on private land. Most of the conservation easement properties are located in the Lake Waban Estates area.

Temporarily-Protected Open Space

Two hundred and fifty-five privately-owned acres are temporarily protected as open space used for forestry, agriculture and recreation under the Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B tax abatement programs. Under these programs, owners receive a lower tax rate as an incentive to maintain the land as open space. Participation is voluntary, and if the land is removed from the program and put on the market, the Town has the right of first refusal. Although the abated taxes must be paid after a sale, in practice this has proved not to deter marketability in areas with low supply and high land prices. Thus, the Town cannot rely upon statutory tax abatement programs for permanent open space protection.

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¹ This acreage represents open space used for municipal purposes, such as school playgrounds.

Unprotected Open Space

The Town's unprotected open space includes school recreation areas and other public active park and playground facilities that are not designated conservation lands or restricted by the terms of their acquisition or improvement, undeveloped open space owned by educational institutions, and large private parcels. Wellesley is unusual among suburban Boston communities in the large amount of privately-owned open space in proportion to its population. The institutional open space contributes greatly to the character of the town and is not under immediate threat of development; however, future use of these properties is a possibility under the Town's zoning code. Major unprotected parcels include 43 acres adjacent to Centennial Park that are owned by Massachusetts Bay Community College and the "North 40" acreage owned by Wellesley College. Existing zoning regulations potentially allow 851 acres of open space to be developed into more than 2,200 dwelling units for both academic and single-family residences.

See Map X: Protected Open Space; Map X: Existing Open Space; Map X: Developable and Unprotected Open Space.

Open Space Funding

Wellesley relies upon Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, general revenues, and resident contributions to fund open space acquisitions and park improvements. Under the CPA, Wellesley voted to impose a 1% surcharge on property taxes for acquisition or preservation of open space, protection of historic properties, and creation of community housing (permanently affordable housing). The amounts raised through the CPA by the Town are then matched by the state. The Town is required to allocate at least 10% of the Community Preservation Fund to open space, affordable housing and historic preservation, but can spend the remaining 70% on any of the three. In FY 2003 and 2004, Wellesley generated \$1,071,000, which was matched by the state, and the Town anticipates raising \$590,748 for the fund in FY 2005. Several recent park improvement projects also benefited from substantial private donations: Warren Park Playground, Phillips Park Playground, Ouellet Park Playing Fields and Playground, and the Hunnewell Field Tot Lot.

Passive Open Space Areas

Centennial Park/Reservation, with 42 acres, is considered the pre-eminent park in Wellesley, as it provides scenic views of Wellesley and the neighboring town of Needham, open meadows, and hiking and nature trails. Fuller Brook Park was the first park in Wellesley, acquired in 1899. Other publicly-owned passive recreation land includes a 19-mile system of trails, nature conservancies, and ponds. Residents also have access to institutionally-owned open space at local colleges.

Figure 2	Dublia	Doggivo	Open Space	in	Wallaclay
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Name	Location	Acres	Park Type	Facilities/Activities
CONSERVATION				
Boulder Brook				
Rocky Ledges				
Overbrook				
Abbott Pond				
Carisbrooke		10.5		
Colborn Road				
MAJOR WALKING PATHS				
Caroline Path	Hunnewell Field to		Conservation	Walking and jogging

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Name	Location	Acres	Park Type	Facilities/Activities
	Maugus Avenue			path
Fuller Brook Path	Dover Road to State Street at Hunnewell Field	33.4	Community Park	Walking, jogging, and cross-country skiing
Cochituate Aqueduct	Route 9 near Natick Line to Weston Road; Woodlawn Avenue to Charles River at Walnut Street	54.59	Conservation	Hiking trails and cross- country skiing
PARKS				
Centennial Park	Oakland Street	41.94	Major Park	Meadows, pond, nature and hiking trails, and cross-country skiing
Elm Park	Washington Street	1.34	Neighborhood Park	Picnic tables, benches, and historic clock tower
Hunnewell Park (Town Hall Park)	Wellesley Square, Washington Street	12.72	Community Park	Arboretum, picnic tables, benches, and duck pond
Longfellow Pond	Oakland Street		Conservation	Fishing, ice skating, hiking trails, and cross- country skiing
Rockridge Pond	Off Hundreds Road	5.12	Neighborhood Park	Fishing and ice-skating
Town Forest	Off Route 9 at Longfellow Pond		Conservation	
Washington Park	River Street		Conservation	Fenway Dam, fishways, and benches
Wellesley Square				
Simons Park				
Morton				
Hillside Road				
Memorial Park				
Reed's Pond				
Clancy's Hollow				
Peabody				
Sawyer				
Shaw Common				
Beebe Meadow				

Trails

Wellesley has an extensive system of trails and paths. The trails provide woodland hiking routes in conservation and park areas. These paths link different parts of Wellesley through open space and, in some segments, on-street routes. The Trails Committee does not seek to create new trails on open space; rather, it only improves paths already blazed by walkers. Fuller Brook Path is the most heavily-used trail due to its location near schools and some municipal buildings, and the Crosstown Trail connects the Morses Pond area to the Charles River. One of the top priorities for the Trails Committee is to activate the Sudbury Trail, which runs through the southern part of Wellesley. In addition, the Trails Committee

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would like to use trails to create more water access in Wellesley and to forge more links with neighboring towns, especially through the Charles River Link, a 15.6-mile regional trail that would ultimately link Wellesley trails to the Bay Circuit Path and the Charles River Riverwalk. The Trails Committee maintains over 15 map houses along the trails and a web site with trail information, sponsors eight walks in the spring and fall that usually attract 50-80 walkers, and provides volunteer opportunities each year for Boy Scout and Girl Scout projects that improve the trails.

Figure 3. Wellesley's Trail System

Trail Name	Location of Trailhead	Length of Trail
Beard Trail	Beard Way off of Grove Street	1.1 miles
Boulder Brook Reservation Trail	Parking lot on Elmwood Road at Kelly	1.6 miles
	Memorial Park	
Brook Path	Maugus Avenue	2.3 miles
Carisbrooke Reservation Trail	End of Glen Brook Road	0.5 miles
Centennial Reservation Trail	Centennial Park parking lot off of Oakland Street	1.1 miles
Charles River Path	Washington Street at Charles River crossing	2.5 miles
Crosstown Trail	Cochituate Aqueduct on Route 9	6.75 miles
Guernsey Path	Parking area on Winding River Road	0.7 miles
Longfellow Pond Trail	Longfellow Pond parking lot off Oakland Street	0.8 miles
Morses Pond Trail	Turner Road intersection of Crosstown Trail	0.6 miles
Rockridge Pond Trail	Parking area off Hundreds Circle	0.35 miles
WCC Guernsey Sanctuary Trail	Entrance to Guernsey Sanctuary near Winding River Road parking area	0.7 miles

In the housing chapter of the Phase I report, the housing development scenarios for the Grossman's site, the St. James's site, and the Wellesley Motor Inn site suggested the potential for trail connections that could be obtained through development agreements.

(See Map X: Wellesley Trails.)

Active Open Space and Recreation Facilities

Wellesley has numerous programs for all age groups, and participation in recreational sports has been increasing among children and adults during the past ten years. Many programs are located at the Warren Recreation Building. Wellesley's recreational programs include sports and activities such as summer day camp, cooking, language classes, and hobbies. Between 1996 and 2004, the number of people participating in Recreation Department programs grew from 5,000 to 6,000. In addition, Morses Pond Beach has about 20,000 users per year. Local sports leagues, such as youth soccer, lacrosse, and baseball, also use Wellesley's fields and contribute \$10 per person for field maintenance costs.

Figure 3. Recreation Facilities in Wellesley

Type of Facility	Available Resources	
Parks	364.59 acres	
Neighborhood (1-5 acres)	46.5 acres	
Playfields (5-15 acres)	100.06 acres	
Community (15+ acres)	82.03 acres	

Type of Facility	Available Resources
Major (25+ acres)	136 acres
Picnic Areas	45.51 acres
Picnic Facilities	32 tables
Tennis	16 courts
Golf	27 holes
Baseball	4 fields
Softball	9 fields
Bicycling	1.7 miles
Hiking	7.79 miles
Nature Trails	19 miles
Cross Country Skiing	7.79 miles
Ice Skating	200,000 square feet
Pond Swimming Shoreline	660 linear feet
Beach Capacity (Morses Pond)	1,240 people
Sailing/Canoeing Pond	312 acres
Fishing Streams	12.7 miles
Fishing Lakes	312 acres

Sources: Wellesley Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1995-1999

Private Recreation

Private recreation opportunities in Wellesley include memberships at local gyms and clubs. Users may purchase athletic memberships at businesses such as Boston Sports Club, which offers tennis courts, a skating rink, and indoor and outdoor pools. Memberships are also available at the Wellesley Country Club, which features an 18-hole golf course, a swimming pool, and tennis and racquetball courts. In addition, it is possible in the near future that the new sports complex at Dana Hall School will open to the public on a fee-per-use basis. User fees for these private facilities generally are expensive. No low-cost private recreational facility exists for family recreation in Wellesley.

(See Map X: Recreation Resources)

Management of Park and Recreation facilities

In addition to the pond restoration program described in the chapter on Natural and Cultural Resources, the NRC is developing the Fuller Brook Park Restoration Plan to provide improvements for one of Wellesley's oldest parks. Built in 1899, the 23-acre Fuller Brook Park contains Wellesley's heaviest-used trail, the Fuller Brook Path. Lack of maintenance over the years has caused the park's infrastructure to deteriorate significantly. The restoration plan, funded in 2003 by Town Meeting, will repair the stone bridges, brook channels, culverts, and the stormwater drainage system. In addition, the restoration plan involves a partnership with the Historical Commission to have the park listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2005, the Community Preservation Committee recommended \$4,700 in funding for the historic survey work. The restoration plan anticipates that National Register listing will make the park eligible for federal and state funds for landscape restoration and improvements. The plan for the Fuller Brook Park restoration is expected to be approved by NRC in the fall of 2005. Implementation will begin in 2006.

Open space used for active recreational programs totals 225 acres of municipally-owned land. Some of this land is attached to schools and includes school playgrounds and playing fields. As is the case in many communities, demand for athletic fields is growing as sports programs increase and need fields

year-round. The town has a limited number of fields and good turf management requires that they be "rested" to keep them from being destroyed by severe overuse. The current maintenance funding system does not provide enough revenue for upkeep or field improvements.

The Playing Fields Task Force was created as an advisory body to the NRC to identify urgently needed improvements and develop a long-range field improvement program. The Task Force has representatives from the NRC, Department of Public Works, Recreation Department, School Department, Wellesley Little League, Wellesley Lacrosse, and Wellesley Soccer Club. Recent playing field improvements have been made at Ouellet Park and Schofield School.

The NRC is implementing an extensive Playground Improvement Master Plan with funding from the Community Preservation Fund, resident groups and individuals, and town sources. Recent improvements were made to Warren Park, Phillips Park, Ouellet Park, and Hunnewell Field Playground. As improvements are made to town recreational facilities of all types, they are upgraded to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and modern safety standards.

Demand for More Park Space and Programs

Demographic Trends

The large growth in the number of children under 18 and the modest increase in older adults create new demands on Wellesley's parks, facilities, and programs. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of families with children under age 18 increased 20% from 2,910 to 3,480. In 2000, 41% of all Wellesley households had children under age 18, compared to only 34% in 1990. During the 1990s, the under-5 population in grew 5% from 1,565 individuals in 1990 to 1,954 in 2000; the 5-9 population grew 27% from 1,534 in 1990 to 1,953 in 2000; and the 10-14 group increased 30% from 1,387 in 1990 to 1,800 in 2000.

The 1990s also saw a rise in the number of older adults in Wellesley. This can be attributed to the aging of the baby boom generation. The 45-54 category rose from 3,241 residents in 1990 to 3,938 in 2000, a 20% increase. In addition, by 2000, 28% of all households had one member that was 65 or older, and 14% of the population was at least 65. Although the total number of over-65 residents declined from 3,720 in 1990 to 3,710 in 2000, the relative stability of this number suggests that senior citizens wish to remain in Wellesley.

Youth and seniors generally comprise the largest class of park users. Wellesley's growing youth population generates a need for additional playing fields, playground areas, and recreational programs. Similarly, the aging population may need more adult recreational programs and passive park amenities, such as walking trails. One of the challenges created by these demographic trends is that of balancing conflicting demands for park uses.

Figure 4.	Youth and Older	· Adult Population	Growth, 1990-2000
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Population Group	1990 Total	2000 Total
Under 5	1,565	1,954
5-9	1,534	1,953
10-14	1,387	1,800
15-19	1,586	2,505
Total Number of Children Age 19	6,072	8,212
and Under		
45-54	3,241	3,938
55-59	1,242	1,437
60-64	1,167	1,070

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65 and over	3,720	3,710
Total Number of Adults Age 45	9,370	10,155
and Older		

Trends in Recreational Tastes and Participation

The past decade has seen a change in the recreational and open space tastes of Americans. Sports activities have expanded from traditional American sports like baseball and football to include other games, such as soccer. In addition, many more children are participating in athletic activities at early ages and several sports have become multi-seasonal. The demand for passive recreational activities has also grown. Moreover, bikeways, trails, and greenways not only provide natural open spaces, but can provide alternative forms of transportation that reduce auto-dependence. All of these trends have affected Wellesley's recreational programs, and its Recreation Department anticipates more demand both for active playing fields in all sports seasons and for passive recreation areas.

Balancing Passive and Active Open Space

Wellesley faces the challenge of preserving and maintaining its current open space for passive uses, water quality, and wildlife habitat while meeting increasing requests for active recreational space. Although demand for park facilities and programs may grow, the town will have to weigh this demand against the environmental benefits that open space provides, such as filtration of pollutants, protection of wildlife, and aesthetic enhancement of the community.

Unprotected Land

The amount of unprotected open space and its potential for conversion may pose a challenge to Wellesley's future open space plans. Although most of the privately-owned open space is in institutional hands, the possibility exists that this land could be developed as part of college expansion plans. The landscaped grounds of Wellesley College, Massachusetts Bay Community College, and Babson College currently contribute to the green infrastructure of the town, but nothing guarantees that this open space will be preserved. In addition, the forest and agricultural land that falls under the M.G.L. c. 61 programs has no preservation guarantee. If an owner chooses to discontinue participation in the tax abatement program, his or her acreage will no longer be protected from development. Although the Town has the right of first refusal on these properties when they emerge from tax abatement programs, land costs are very high and it may be difficult for the Town to act quickly enough when the land goes on the market.

The NRC has had some success in encouraging private owners to place conservation restrictions on part of their property. Wellesley and Babson, although they may need to build new or expanded buildings in the future, will also wish to preserve the green character of their campuses. The Town needs to be in regular communication with the colleges to make sure that that green character is also preserved at the campus edges with the town. Massachusetts Bay Community College, as a public college, is in a somewhat different position because the state could decide to sell some college lands. The NRC is talking to Massachusetts Bay Community College about placing some land under conservation restrictions.

Need for Linkages

The Town also needs to continue to create linkages between its open space areas and significant town destinations. Linkages promote safe use of Wellesley's open space, discourage car usage, and may also serve as animal movement corridors between habitats. Although several natural corridors exist, such as the Fuller Brook Path, the Caroline Brook Path, and the Cochituate and Sudbury Aqueducts, the Trails

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Committee continues to look for opportunities to link open space throughout the town and eventually to the region.

High Cost of Open Space Acquisition and Maintenance

The rising cost of real estate in Wellesley makes acquisition of new park land difficult. As land values rise, the chance of the Town being able to purchase more park land decreases. In addition, proximity to existing park areas increases land values and may make expansion of current parks more difficult. For example, a one-acre parcel of land adjacent to Town-owned parkland on Rockridge Pond cost \$700,000 in 2002. Also, the "built-out" condition of Wellesley suggests that few large parcels in single ownership will be available for future purchase. Thus, the real estate market works against expanding the town park system through acquiring new properties for open space.

Although park funding is available under the terms of the Community Preservation Act, money from the Community Preservation Fund will not cover the costs of significant land acquisition or program expansion. For example, if land costs \$700,000 per acre, the local and state taxes obtained under the Community Preservation Act each year (approximately \$1,000,000) will not cover the costs of a 2-acre purchase. In addition, Wellesley faces increased maintenance costs associated with heavy use of its playing fields. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts help the Trails Committee in maintaining and improving trails. Existing "friends" groups have also raised money for open space improvements.

B. Recommendations

Continue to protect and, where appropriate and feasible, expand open space in Wellesley.

ACTIONS

 The Trails Committee should seek to expand the trails system through easements contributed by property owners.

The Trails Committee should continue to determine whether trails are appropriate for land acquired by the NRC through donations or purchase. Paths across small parcels may link with the greater trail system and provide residents with new passive open space opportunities. In addition, the Trails Committee should work to negotiate easements with property owners, particularly for parcels that could provide strategic links for the trails system. (A detailed list of Trails Committee priorities is in an appendix at the end of this chapter.)

- The Natural Resources Commission should continue to identify important open space properties and work with property owners to obtain conservation easements.

 The NRC should continue to seek donations of conservation easements from owners of undeveloped land, particularly where this land lies adjacent to existing protected land. Although easements on some properties may be readily obtained through bequests or gifts, it is important to identify key open space properties and pursue the donation of conservation easements on those properties.
- Enact mandatory cluster zoning for large parcels of open space to allow limited development if these properties cannot fully be protected.

 Cluster zoning would ensure that a significant portion of the developed parcel will remain as private open space. This type of zoning would prevent a project from occupying the entire lot; instead, structures and paved areas would be grouped together at a higher density on one portion of the property, thus leaving part of the property as open space. In addition, the Planning Board should make certain that the Town's open space goals are taken into account when reviewing site plans and should encourage developers to use low-impact design strategies on these parcels.

Conduct a recreational needs assessment that will reflect collaboration between the Natural Resources Commission and the Recreation Commission/Department.

Because the NRC's primary mission is conservation and environmental protection, there are sometimes tensions with advocates for more playing fields and active recreational uses of park lands. Wellesley's growing youth population is placing greater demands on programs and facilities, and Town departments are facing competing requests for active and passive recreational lands. The Playing Fields Task Force develops priorities for field improvements, but does not focus on expansion of field access. The NRC and the Recreation Department should coordinate an inventory and needs assessment that will provide information from which to make decisions regarding active and passive recreational uses.

ACTIONS

 Coordinate a recreation needs assessment between the Natural Resources Commission, the Recreation Commission and Department, and the Department of Public Works.
 Conduct an assessment of existing recreation facilities (active and passive), the impacts of these facilities, and a determination of future recreation needs based on population projections and current demands. Use the results of this assessment to inform future decisions made by Town departments and commissions.

The results of the assessment should be used by Town departments as conflicts arise between the need for active and passive recreation space. A current inventory can inform management and use decisions and can aid the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen in understanding Wellesley's short- and long-term open space and recreation needs.

Keep the Open Space and Recreation Plan updated every five years.

Continued collaboration between the NRC and the Recreation Department should keep the recreation needs/inventory updated, and this relationship should allow the two groups to communicate explicitly about Wellesley's recreation issues and challenges. Ongoing recordkeeping and dialogue will enable the Town to stay current with the Open Space and Recreation Plan and keep Wellesley eligible for grant funding from the state Division of Conservation Services.

Work with institutional partners to protect open space and provide additional recreational facilities.

Three large institutions own most of the remaining unprotected open space in Wellesley. Babson College and Wellesley College, the two private institutions, may build in their open spaces as part of college expansions. Massachusetts Bay Community College, a state-owned entity, may be more likely to sell its open space to a developer. Good communication is needed with these entities in order to learn development plans early or to negotiate options to protect or purchase institutional open space.

ACTIONS

- Establish and maintain relationships with key figures at Massachusetts Bay Community
 College, Babson College, and Wellesley College that will provide the NRC and the Trails
 Committee with information about changes in use of each institution's current open space properties.
- Town committees and boards should communicate with each other regarding potential open space losses. The NRC and the Trails Committee should ensure that any information received regarding the loss of unprotected open space is shared quickly with the Planning Board.

Pursue greater connectivity of open spaces on a local and regional level.

Wellesley's trail system provides excellent links among some of the Town's open spaces. As the Trails Committee contemplates new projects, it should look to create new connections within the Town that will provide citizens with more recreational opportunities and alternatives to car travel. In addition, the Trails Committee and the NRC should seek to create regional connections for its open space system.

ACTIONS

 Continue to refine the trails system by looking at ways to connect major open space areas.

The Trails Committee continues to update its system to maximize connectivity opportunities. This includes not only the activation of new trails (such as the Sudbury Aqueduct), but the relocation of existing trails (such as the Cochituate Path, portions of which were closed and relocated to the Crosstown Trail) and trail connections to town destinations, train stations, schools, and office areas.

Work with other towns and recreation groups to form links to regional trails and open spaces.

Strengthen relationships with neighboring towns and regional recreation groups to work on creating links between Wellesley's open space system and that of other open space systems in

the region. Trails could link to reservations or to existing trails that will provide access to recreation or transportation opportunities in other towns, such as the Riverside T station in Newton or the Massachusetts Bay Circuit Trail.

Seek management options that will allow more productive use of Town-owned and private active recreational space rather than converting passive into active open space.

Wellesley is experiencing significant pressures to find more active recreation land to support local sports. Playing fields are overused, and maintenance of these fields is difficult. In addition, high property values prevent the Town from acquiring new land for recreational facilities. Many residents have asked the Town to convert some of its passive open space into playing fields, but the passive spaces are also used and valued by other residents. Without the prospect of acquisition of new recreational space, the Town must find new management options for its existing active open space.

ACTIONS

- Evaluate the contribution of fees to maintenance and increase fees assessed to local sports leagues for use of the Town's playing fields if appropriate.
 - Many sports leagues use Wellesley's playing fields each season, including youth soccer, baseball, and lacrosse. Each of these organizations pays \$10 per player to the Recreation Department for field maintenance. Since heavy field use increases maintenance costs, the Town should evaluate whether it is appropriate to fund these higher costs by assessing a higher fee per person to these sports leagues.
- Add lighting to recreational facilities in order to extend the hours of use where appropriate. The Recreation Department can provide greater opportunities for field use by installing lights where practical. The impact on abutting residents, however, can be a problem. Lights should be installed in areas that will have low to moderate impacts on surrounding properties.
- Continue to investigate the possibility of using local institutional facilities for Town programs with leadership from the Board of Selectmen.
 - Although the Recreation Department has determined in the past that agreements with local colleges for large-scale facility use would prove too costly, the need for additional recreation space suggests that this alternative be revisited. The Recreation Department currently rents the pool at Wellesley College for water safety classes and Teen Center programs. Good relationships with the three colleges and Dana Hall School could lead to the Recreation Department being allowed to use institutional facilities for expansion of Town recreation programs. This may be particularly important for swimming programs and access to playing fields. The Board of Selectmen, not the Recreation Department, should assume a leadership role in negotiating with local institutions to allow the public to use their recreational facilities for a fee. This will involve working with the understanding that users in Town programs will not prevent students and staff of those institutions from using their own facilities. An agreement of this kind may involve higher user fees and a willingness on the Town's part to provide a service in return for this recreational access.

Develop a plan to construct an aquatic facility on Town land that will be funded through a public-private partnership.

One of the top recreation needs identified both by the Recreation Department and Wellesley residents is a public aquatic facility that will host competitive swimming and family water activities. It is unrealistic to expect that the Town will be able to acquire a parcel of land that is large enough to accommodate an aquatic center; therefore, a center will have to be placed on current Town property. An opportunity exists as the Town considers a new high school.

ACTIONS

• Work with the School Board to incorporate plans for an aquatic center into the design for a new high-school complex.

The Town should work closely with the School Board to design an aquatic center that will fit into the school complex and function both as a school athletic facility and as a community recreation center. The design should be sensitive to the needs of school programs, and the Recreation Department should agree that any programs it will conduct at the new facility will not impede school use.

• Investigate the potential for a public-private partnership that will drive construction of an aquatic center.

Concord's new aquatic center may provide a model for Wellesley to follow. The Concord Community Swim and Health Center is located on school property and funded through private donations to a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity formed to construct the facility. This facility will include a pool for competitive swimming, a therapy pool, a children's pool, and a diving well, along with a fitness center and community gathering rooms. Concord's aquatic center will be built entirely through private funding (\$9.5 million), and user fees will be set high enough to ensure that the facility will be self-supporting in the future.

• Locate a dedicated source of revenue for ongoing maintenance and operation.

If Wellesley follows the Concord model, the Town must ensure that it determines how the aquatic center will be operated and how it will secure an ongoing source of funding for operations and maintenance. A large facility such as an aquatic center cannot be funded entirely through tax revenues each year. In order to make sure that it is a community center and not just a school pool, the School Committee should not be responsible for funding operations. A combination of user fees and an endowment may be necessary to provide a stable, continuous funding stream that will not require reduction or elimination of other Recreation Department programs.

Continue to develop recreational programs that will fit the needs of Wellesley's changing population.

As more families with children move to Wellesley, the Recreation Department will experience greater demand for youth programs. These programs include sports and other activities such as painting, dancing, and cooking. The growth in programs over the last decade also suggests that more programs will be needed for adults and seniors. Although these programs are all fee programs, the Town must make certain that they remain affordable for any lower-income residents.

ACTIONS

• Continue to offer a wide variety of recreational opportunities that suit the interests of Wellesley residents.

The Recreation Department must ensure that it continues to offer a variety of sports programs as Wellesley's youth population grows. Programs should follow user desires, such as more soccer leagues and swimming opportunities. In addition, the Recreation Department should continue to offer a variety of classes, such as cooking, language classes, and painting, to both children and adults. The Council on Aging must also provide recreation opportunities for seniors. Needs and desires for recreational programs can be measured through yearly user surveys.

• Seek additional funding for recreation programs from higher user fees and private sources. The Recreation Department will need to find increased funds for additional programs. One way in which to do this is to charge higher user fees. Youth sports leagues may be assessed higher

fees to cover increased costs of field maintenance, and recreation classes offered to children and adults may need to increase registration fees. In addition, non-Wellesley residents who use Town programs should continue to be assessed fees at a higher rate than Wellesley residents. Non-resident fees, though, may need to rise from their current rate of \$5 more than Wellesley residents (\$15 more at Morses Pond Beach). Donations could also be pursued from private businesses and institutions in Wellesley.

• Ensure that lower-income residents have access to recreational programs by building the current scholarship fund.

The Recreation Department's scholarship fund helps defray the costs of programs for lower-income residents. In 2004, the Recreation Department had approximately \$20,000 in requests for scholarships, particularly for day camp participation. The department asked Wellesley residents for donations to this fund, but only received \$35. As a result, the department appealed to private industry for more funds. This practice should be continued in order to raise money for summer day camp and other program fees. When asking for donations, the Recreation Department should be sure to identify income levels that would qualify a resident to receive a scholarship, along with information on the number of people in Wellesley who could be helped by the program, so that potential donors become more aware of the need in Wellesley.

APPENDIX

Wellesley Trails Committee Future Trails Development and Improvement Projects

Project locations are shown on the attached map by project number. In setting our priorities, we compared key issues and cost. The projects are rated according to the following criteria:

- Benefits to trails network: High, Medium, Low
- Trail access issues*: Difficult, Moderate, Easy, None
- Town capital cost: High (greater than \$10,000), Moderate (between \$1,000 and \$10,000), Low (less than \$1,000), None
- Town ongoing expense: High (greater than \$1,000/year), Moderate (between \$100 and \$1,000/year), Low (less than \$100/year).

The projects, in rank order of priority starting with highest priority, are:

- 1. Sudbury Path: New trail along the Sudbury Aqueduct from the Needham town line at Hunnewell St. to the Wellesley Research Center on Washington St.
- 2. Brook Path Improvements at High School: Part of the Fuller Brook Restoration Master Plan. Provide a continuous, well-defined path between the State St. parking lot and the trail off Paine St.
- 3. Weston Road Trail Parking: Parking and a safe pedestrian crossing at Weston Rd. and Linden St.
- 4. Guernsey Path Extension: Extension of the current trail from the Waban Arches to the Crosstown Trail.
- 5. Charles River Path Extension in Lower Falls: Part of the Wellesley Lower Falls Riverway Project. Trail extension from Washington St. to the Charles River will provide the Wellesley link for the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) plan to develop a foot and bike path along the old railroad right-of-way to the MBTA Riverside station. Our proposal includes a picturesque bridge of flowers over the Charles.
- 6. Charles River Path Extension to Boulevard Rd: A continuation of the Lower Falls Charles River Path Extension in Lower Falls. Trail will run along the Charles River, beginning in back of the former Grossman's site and proceeding along DCR land to the end of Boulevard Rd.
- 7. Elm Bank Trail: A new trail along the Charles River from the Waban Arches to Cheney Dr.
- 8. Rosemary Brook Trail: New woodland trail through the Town Forest north of Rt. 9.
- 9. Overbrook Trail: New woodland trail through the Overbrook Reservation.
- 10. Charles River Footbridge to Elm Bank: Proposed footbridge across the Charles River that will connect open space near the Waban Arches to Elm Bank. The bridge is inspired by the Blue Heron Bridge recently built by DCR across the Charles connecting Newton to Watertown.

Comparison of Trails Projects

Project	Benefits to Trails	Access Issues*	Capital Cost	Ongoing Expense
	Network			
1. Sudbury Path	High	Difficult	High	Moderate
2. Brook Path Improvements at High School	High	Moderate	Moderate	None
3. Weston Road Trail Parking	High	Moderate	High	Moderate
4. Guernsey Path Extension	High	Difficult	Moderate	None
5. Charles River Path Extension in Lower Falls	High	Easy	Moderate	Moderate
6. Charles River Path Extension to Boulevard Rd	High	Moderate	None	None
7. Elm Bank Trail	Medium	Difficult	Low	None
8. Rosemary Brook Trail	Low	Moderate	None	None
9. Overbrook Trail	Low	Difficult	Low	None
10. Charles River Footbridge to Elm Bank	Medium	Moderate	None**	None

^{*} Access issues include permission from landowners, safety concerns, terrain conditions, parking availability, and trail route compromises (see Appendix for details).

Detailed Project Information

1. Sudbury Path

Purpose:

- 1. Provide a trail along the Sudbury Aqueduct.
- 2. Provide a major network trail that connects together the historic Waban Arches, Beebe Meadow, the Town Forest and continues on to Echo Bridge in Needham at Hemlock Gorge.

Route:

- 1. Follow the Sudbury Aqueduct from Hunnewell St. at the Needham town line to the Wellesley Research Center on Washington St.
- 2. Open space is not contiguous along the aqueduct, and the trail will be routed off of the aqueduct at three locations:
 - 2a. Wellesley Country Club to Great Plain Ave: Trail will be routed along Wellesley St. and through Babson and Olin Colleges.
 - 2b. At the intersection of Benvenue and Grove Sts: Trail will be routed along Benvenue St.
 - 2c. Behind the Wellesley Research Center the trail will be routed through the Wellesley College property to Washington St.
- 3. Trail has connections to Hemlock Gorge, Charles River Path, Beard Trail, Guernsey Path, Charles River Link, and Elm Bank Trail.

Access Issues:

- 1. Permission from MWRA for Sudbury Aqueduct access. Aqueduct is an operational, tertiary-backup water supply for Boston.
- 2. Permission from Babson College to route trail through campus from the intersection of Forest and Wellesley Sts. to the existing trail in back of skating rink.
- 3. Permission from Olin College to route trail from behind the skating rink to Sudbury Aqueduct near Great Plain Ave.
- 4. Wellesley College has previously granted us access permission through the Wellesley Research Center, and we need to confirm the agreement.

^{**} It is assumed that the footbridge will be built and funded by DCR.

- 5. We would like to continue the trail along Washington St to Cherney Dr. There are two reasons we have decided not to include this option in our current proposal: 1) Narrow shoulders along the south side of Washington St. would make construction of a sidewalk difficult, and 2) inadequate sight visibility for a crosswalk to the north side of Washington St., where there is sufficient room for a sidewalk.
- 6. Mitigation of safety concerns using Waban Arches as Waban Brook trail crossing. Dependence on Other Projects:
 - 1. None.

Betterments:

- 1. Sidewalk along golf course on north side of Wellesley St. at Forest St. intersection.
- 2. Crosswalk at Great Plain Ave. aqueduct crossing (need to work with Needham).
- 3. Sidewalk along Benvenue St. from Grove St. west to intersection of Sudbury Aqueduct. An alternative option is to use path to Buckingham Ter. off Grove St., and construct sidewalk on Dover Rd.
- 4. Crosswalk on Dover Rd. at aqueduct crossing.

Ongoing Expenses:

1. MWRA will most likely want us to support trail maintenance along aqueduct.

2. Brook Path Improvements at High School

Purpose:

- 1. Reduce walkers' confusion navigating this section of Brook Path.
- 2. Provide well-defined path through high school playing fields and past high school.

Route:

1. Trail section is from the State St. parking lot to the wood-chipped trail off Paine St.

Access Issues:

- 1. Proximity to active sports.
- 2. Wet areas need to be avoided.

Dependence on Other Projects:

1. Fuller Brook Restoration Master Plan.

Betterments:

- 1. Construct new path.
- 2. Move State St parking lot about 4-ft to the south to allow for safer pedestrian access along Fuller Brook.
- 3. Costs to be included under the NRC's Fuller Brook Restoration Master Plan.

Ongoing Expenses:

1. None.

3. Weston Road Trail Parking

Purpose:

- 1. Provide crosswalk across Weston Rd. at Linden St. to improve pedestrian safety.
- 2. Provide parking for Crosstown Trail and Cochituate Path at Weston Rd. and Linden St.

Route:

1. N/A.

Access Issues:

- 1. A temporary parking lot adjacent to the electric substation was used during renovation of the Wellesley Congregational Church and could be made into a permanent parking lot.
- 2. Note that there are access issues for cars entering and exiting the driveway to the parking lot. Dependence on Other Projects:
 - 1. None.

Betterments:

- 1. Install blinking-light pedestrian crossing at driveway to electric substation.
- 2. Pave public parking area in front of electric substation.

Ongoing Expenses:

1. Maintenance of parking lot and blinking-light pedestrian crossing.

4. Guernsey Path Extension

Purpose:

1. Provide a trail from the Waban Arches to the Crosstown Trail.

Route:

- 1. From the current end of the Guernsey Path at Waban Arches, go under the arches and follow trails and road east through golf course to Dover Rd. Follow Dover Rd north to Washington St., east on Washington St. to Weston Rd., and north on Weston Rd. to Linden St.
- 2. Connection to the Sudbury Path, Brook Path, and Crosstown Trail.

Access Issues:

1. Permission from Wellesley for access along road through Nehoiden golf course. Roadway crosses two fairways, but is used by vehicles to access golfer's parking and the Nehoiden House.

Dependence on Other Projects:

1. None.

Betterments:

1. Complete sidewalk along Dover Rd. from Ingraham Rd. to Leighton Rd.

Ongoing Expenses:

1. None.

5. Charles River Path Extension in Lower Falls

Purpose:

- 1. Provide a foot and bike path which will link with a DCR project to provide access to Riverside MBTA station along old railroad right-of-way in Lower Falls.
- 2. Create a picturesque crossing over the Charles River with a bridge of flowers.

Route:

1. Washington St. to railroad bridge across Charles River.

Access Issues:

- 1. Provide access from right-of-way strip to railroad bridge. Currently there is a fence there.
- 2. Note that DCR is planning to refurbish the railroad bridge and develop the trail from the Newton side of the bridge to Riverside.

Dependence on Other Projects:

- 1. DCR refurbishing of railroad bridge across the Charles and developing the trail from the Newton side of the bridge to Riverside.
- 2. Lower Falls Riverway Project.

Betterments:

- 1. Trail access from Washington St. to railroad bridge.
- 2. Bridge of flowers on railroad bridge.
- 3. Costs to be included under the Planning Board's Lower Falls Riverway Project.

Ongoing Expenses

1. Planting and maintenance of flowers and flowerboxes (Wellesley garden clubs?).

6. Charles River Path Extension to Boulevard Rd.

Purpose:

- 1. Provide a trail along the Charles in Lower Falls behind the former Grossman's site.
- 2. Provide a trail along the river from Lower Falls to proposed canoe landing at end of Boulevard Rd.

Route:

1. Follow Charles River from the railroad bridge crossing to the end of Boulevard Rd.

Access Issues:

- 1. Include as a condition for development of former Grossmen's site the development of a trail along the river.
- 2. Permission from DCR for developing a trail along Charles from former Grossman's site to end of Boulevard Rd.

Dependence on Other Projects:

1. Development of the former Grossman's site.

Betterments:

- 1. None for trail behind former Grossman's site. Provided by the developer.
- 2. Extend existing trail through DCR land along Charles River. There is already a footbridge across Indian Springs Brook built by DCR.

Ongoing Expenses

1. None.

7. Elm Bank Trail

Purpose:

1. Provide a trail along the Charles River from the Waban Arches to Elm Bank.

Route:

- 1. Waban Arches along Charles River to Cheney Dr.
- 2. Connection from Sudbury Path to Elm Bank Trail.

Access Issues:

- 1. Permission from Wellesley College for trail access from Waban Arches to Hunnewell private property along the river.
- 2. Obtain access agreements or renegotiate CRs with private-property landowners for permission for public trail along river.

Dependence on Other Projects:

1. None.

Betterments:

- 1. Develop a footpath along wooded sections of river.
- 2. Construct a footbridge over Pollock Brook which flows into the Charles.

Ongoing Expenses:

1. None.

8. Rosemary Brook Trail

Purpose:

1. Provide a woodland trail through the Town Forest north of Rt. 9.

Route:

- 1. Start trail off Rt. 9 west-bound ramp at Electric Substation building and follow Rosemary Brook west to Water Department building on Rt. 9.
- 2. Connection to the Charles River Path on Cedar St.

Access Issues:

1. Parking lots not available on either end of the trail (restricted to Water and Electric Departments' vehicles). Parking is along ramp to Rt. 9 or off Cedar St.

Dependence on Other Projects:

1. None.

Betterments:

1. Trail needs to be cleared through the pine grove woods adjacent to Rosemary Brook.

Ongoing Expenses:

1. None.

9. Overbrook Trail

Purpose:

1. Provide a neighborhood woodland trail through the Overbrook Reservation in the Fells part of town.

Route:

- 1. Start at Overbrook Reservation sign on Weston Rd. and loop around land on the north side of Boulder Brook.
- 2. No connection to other trails.

Access Issues:

- 1. Only access to this open space is along a short section of Weston Rd., the ramp up to Rt. 9, and along Rt. 9.
- 2. To improve neighborhood access, obtain trail easement from resident on Shirley or Livingston Rd. This may be difficult to obtain.

Dependence on Other Projects:

1. None.

Betterments:

- 1. Construct steps down from Weston Rd. sidewalk.
- 2. Construct a 15-ft footbridge across Boulder Bk.
- 3. Construct some bog bridges to get over wet spots between Weston Rd. and footbridge.
- 4. Develop loop trail on high ground north of brook.

Ongoing Expenses:

1. None.

10. Charles River Footbridge to Elm Bank

Purpose:

- 1. Provide a scenic bridge over the Charles linking open space in Wellesley and Dover.
- 2. Direct connection from Wellesley to Elm Bank.

Route:

1. Bridge connecting Elm Bank Trail to DCR trails in Elm Bank.

Access Issues:

1. Permission from Wellesley College for footbridge. Wellesley side of footbridge is located on Wellesley College property west of Waban Arches.

Dependence on Other Projects:

1. Get DCR excited about constructing the footbridge and making it a DCR funded project.

Betterments:

1. No cost to town. It is assumed that DCR will obtain funding for construction and build the footbridge.

Ongoing Expenses:

1. None. It is assumed that DCR will maintain the footbridge.

